



Southern Vermont AUDIOLOGY

total hearing solutions



**October is
National Protect
Your Hearing
Month**

Why Hearing Loss Increases Your Risk of Falls and What To Do About It

For older people, falls are a big fear. As we age, our hearing and balance naturally decline. **Falls are the number one cause of injuries and death among older Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In fact, every second of the day in the United States an older adult falls.**



After a fall, people tend to retreat to their chairs, which sets off a bad cycle: you move less, you become weaker, and are more likely to fall again. A growing number of research suggest that hearing loss contributes to falls.

How hearing and balance are connected

What you hear (and don't hear) directly affects your balance. This is especially important if your balance isn't the best. "Most of us in the field believe that people with poor balance benefit a lot from auditory cues," states Timothy Hullar, MD, a professor of otolaryngology at Oregon Health and Science University. Researchers at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the National Institute of Aging discovered that hearing loss increases the risk of falls by a significant amount for older people. In fact, the risks increase 140 percent for every additional 10 decibels of hearing loss.

Even mild hearing loss can affect fall risk

A 25-decibel hearing loss, equivalent to going from normal to mild hearing loss, triples your chance of falling according to one study. Another study, from a team at the University of Michigan, analyzed data on nearly 115,000 seniors newly diagnosed with hearing loss (but otherwise healthy). It found that 13 percent had an injury from a fall within three years, compared to 7.5 percent of the general population their age.

DID YOU HEAR?

Researchers reasoned that there might be several factors that led to these results. One cause could be that hearing-impaired individuals have less environmental awareness to people, pets and other things going on around them, so they are more likely to collide with them. Secondly, researchers suggested that cognitive overload hinders balance. This means that those with hearing loss are using more of their mental resources to hear and interpret speech and other sounds, leaving fewer resources available to dedicate to maintaining balance and gait.

Do hearing aids help prevent falls?

Researchers evaluated if the use of hearing aids could help improve balance and if the lack of hearing aids could negatively affect it. Participants were given increasingly complex tests that involved standing with feet together on a foam pad with their eyes covered, standing with one foot in front of the other, etc. As the tests became more demanding, all of the subjects had more difficulty maintaining balance when their hearing aids were turned off. In one test called the 'heel to toe test' participants with their hearing aids turned on were able to maintain balance twice as long as when their hearing aids were turned off. Researchers concluded that the subjects used auditory reference points or landmarks to help maintain balance.

We know that hearing aids play an important role in maintaining communication, social relationships, and preventing age-related cognitive decline. This research also indicates that improved hearing from hearing aids can help preserve balance and decrease risk of injury from accidental falls.



Hearing Aid Wax Guards: Why it's important to change them and how they work

A hearing aid wax guard is a small screen that fits onto your hearing aid and protects it from becoming clogged. Hearing aid wax guards prevent wax and other debris from entering the instrument and sticking to functional components such as the speaker.

The most common reason a hearing aid might not be working is that it may be clogged with ear wax or debris. If ear wax or other debris does eventually build up on the receiver or other internal components, the device will require repair by an audiologist or the manufacturer.

The wax guard serves as a preventative measure to trap the ear wax and debris, allowing the hearing aid user to remove it without damaging the device.

Ear wax is a natural part of your body's defenses against dirt and bacteria.

Even with its natural benefits, ear wax can be bad for your hearing aids. Wax guards are useful because they can easily be changed to extend the lifespan of your hearing aids. Unfortunately, all the parts on hearing aids are small and not always easy for the hearing aid user to change.

Our office staff is happy to assist our patients with this maintenance.



A Consumer Alert on Direct to Consumer Hearing Aids

California Attorney General Rob Bonta issued a consumer alert warning Californians to exercise caution when purchasing direct-to-consumer hearing devices, over-the-counter or online. With the growing popularity, availability, and confusion about these products, the Attorney General urges the public to educate themselves about their options, and consider whether a hearing aid sold online or over-the-counter, rather than prescribed by a doctor, will address their specific needs.

“Healthcare costs can add up, which is why many of us seek out more affordable options that make sense for our families,” said Bonta. “While hearing aids sold online or over-the-counter may appear to be more cost-effective than traditional hearing aids, they may not properly address your particular hearing loss needs or may be outright scams. As you explore options, know your rights, beware of false claims, and exercise caution if you choose to purchase from an unlicensed seller.”

As federal administrators draft proposed regulations for over-the-counter hearing aids, California law requires all hearing aid sellers, including online and over-the-counter sellers, to be licensed with the Department of Consumer Affairs' Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and Hearing Aid Dispensers Board.

Get checked by a licensed audiologist

Hearing loss may be caused by a variety of factors - from simple earwax buildup to more serious complications. While online or app-based hearing tests may be convenient, they may fail to detect individualized or serious hearing loss issues. If you need a hearing aid, an audiologist, who is authorized to test your hearing, can prescribe one that is individualized to your needs.

Beware of misleading claims

Over-the-counter hearing aids are meant to treat mild to moderate hearing loss and may not be able to treat severe hearing loss. Hearing aids advertised as “FDA registered” merely means the company has registered with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It does not mean it has been FDA approved.

Know your rights

If you are unhappy with your hearing aids, California (and Vermont) law allows you to return them within 45 days of receipt for a refund or exchange. The seller must provide you with a written statement with this information and the date of expiration for the return period.

At Southern Vermont Audiology, patients always receive a full diagnostic audiological evaluation including hearing loss treatment options or a referral to a physician if medical treatment is a possibility. Treatment options are personalized for an individual's hearing needs and budget. We are an independent local practice with long-lasting, genuine relationships with our patients. We take pride in our personal level of care and professional environment to make your visit an exceptional and positive experience.

WHO: 1 in 4 people projected to have hearing problems by 2050

Nearly 2.5 billion people worldwide - or 1 in 4 - will be living with some degree of hearing loss by 2050, warns the World Health Organization (WHO).



At least 700 million of these people will require access to ear and hearing care and other rehabilitation services unless action is taken. “Our ability to hear is precious. Untreated hearing loss can have a devastating impact on people’s ability to communicate, to study and to earn a living. It can also impact people’s mental health and their ability to sustain relationships,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Main Findings of Report

Lack of accurate information and stigmatizing attitudes to ear diseases and hearing loss often limit people from accessing care for these conditions. Even among healthcare providers, there’s often a shortage of knowledge about prevention, early identification and management of hearing loss and ear diseases, hampering their ability to provide the care required. In most countries, ear and hearing care is still not integrated into national health systems and accessing these services is challenging for those with hearing related issues.

Main Causes of Hearing Loss

In children, almost 60% of hearing loss can be prevented through measures such as immunization for prevention of rubella and meningitis, improved maternal and neonatal care, and management of ear infections. In adults, noise control, safe listening and monitoring of ototoxic medicines together with good ear hygiene can reduce the risk of hearing loss. Identification is the first step in addressing hearing loss and related ear diseases. Screenings at strategic points in life ensure that any loss of hearing and ear diseases can be identified as early as possible.

Access to Timely and Appropriate Care

“To ensure that the benefit of these technological advances and solutions is equitably accessible to all, countries must adopt an integrated people-centered approach,” said Dr. Bente Mikkelsen, Director of WHO Department of Noncommunicable Diseases. “Integrating ear and hearing care interventions within the national health plans and delivering these through strengthened health systems, as part of universal health coverage, is essential to meet the needs of those at risk or living with hearing loss.”

If you or your loved one feels they have trouble hearing and communicating, make an appointment with a licensed audiologist for a hearing evaluation. Early intervention is key!

Patient Corner



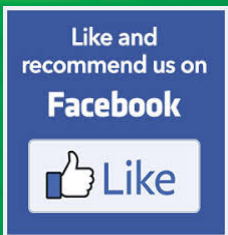
“Thank you helping me achieve considerable improvements in my hearing. It is remarkable how much less work it is to be able to hear in noisy places. I don’t come away from these situations exhausted and frustrated from the effort to hear!”

Did You Know?



Did you know that they used parrots in World War I because they have amazing hearing ability? Sitting atop the Eiffel Tower these feathered little soldiers had a special ability and an important duty. Due to their superior hearing ability, parrots were enlisted to detect any incoming aircraft long before any human could pick up the sound.

The parrots were trained to loudly squawk if any aircraft was heard coming and amazingly they could detect them coming from 20 miles away! These beautiful and colorful birds were able to pick up the sounds of many different aircrafts such as biplanes, Boeings, helicopters and even blimps! Alas, they eventually stopped the project because as amazing as these parrots were, the only thing they could not detect with their amazing hearing ability was if the aircraft was German or allied.



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO
SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT
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